

## TEACHER EMPOWERMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. JOHN B. LARSON**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 20, 1999*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1995) to amend the elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to empower teachers, improve student achievement through high-quality professional development for teachers, reauthorize the Reading Excellence Act, and for other purposes:

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Castle-Fletcher amendment to the Teacher Empowerment Act to increase teachers knowledge of classroom technology. It is vitally important, as we approach the 21st century, that in order to remain competitive in the global economy, we adapt and, indeed, stay ahead of the revolutionary technological advances that are changing our lives on a daily basis.

Once a mere concept, the knowledge based economy is now a reality. I have often heard mentioned that the leap technology has taken is analogous to going from the dark ages to the renaissance, from cloistered monks scrolling information for the scholarly few to Gutenberg inventing movable type, and exposing the masses to the knowledge contained in books. It is indeed a momentous change. But to maintain our position in the global stage, we must make sure that we integrate technology into our society at the most important stage of our children's development. We must integrate technology into our children's classrooms.

To help our children maintain their competitive advantage in the Information Age, we must give our teachers the tools they need to integrate technology in the classroom. With this amendment we take a positive step in this direction. This amendment would allow professional development programs funded under the Act to provide training for teachers in the uses of technology and its uses in the classroom to improve teaching and learning. It would also provide state funds to Local Education Agencies and Higher Education Partnerships for development of programs that train teachers how to use technology in the classroom.

The amendment is important because integrating technology into the classrooms is not just about wiring schools to the Internet. It is also about making sure that we integrate all aspects of technology, including voice, video, data and distance learning, into the curriculum and that we do so effectively. Our teachers should be trained to develop innovative ways to include technology in teaching our children. Not just to teach our children to surf the Web—although I suspect that is not the children who need help in this area—but also to develop ways to use technology in actual subject matter.

As a former teacher and father of three children, it is quite evident to me that a comprehensive approach should be developed to place our children in a position to excel in this new economy. To that effect, I recently introduced a bill that will develop a strategic plan to create a national technological infrastructure to connect public schools to the information

superhighway. It is only the first step in a three-pronged strategy that will include infrastructure support, teacher enhancement, and child development. In the meantime, I will continue to be a strong supporter of efforts that move our classrooms into the 21st century.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentlemen from Delaware, Mr. CASTLE and the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. FLETCHER for their vision in offering this amendment to improve the efficiency of our teachers and to prepare our children for the challenges they will face in the coming century. I urge all my colleagues to support this amendment.

## INTERNET CENSORSHIP; JUVENILE VIOLENCE; LOWERING THE DRINKING AGE TO 18

**HON. BERNARD SANDERS**

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 21, 1999*

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I insert for printing in the RECORD statements by high school students from my home State of Vermont, who were speaking at my recent town meeting on issues facing young people today. I am asking that you please insert these statements in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD as I believe that the views of these young persons will benefit my colleagues.

## INTERNET CENSORSHIP

(On behalf of Amanda Cawthra, Angela Bellizzi, Renay Thompson, and Nick Stahle)

Amanda Cawthra: The First Amendment clearly states that people have the freedom of speech. However, we have to speak to you about government infringement on this basic right, guaranteed in the Constitution. The issue we are talking about is Internet censorship, and whether the government has the right to mandate what can be accessed through the Net.

Nick Stahle: Censorship on the Internet has become a major issue, especially now in the late 1990s. Several bills have been proposed to protect children from explicit material, such as the Communications Decency Act and the Child Online Protection Act. However, we feel it is not the government's place to mandate what can and cannot be posted on the Internet. If parents do not want their children to be exposed to this material, there are several software programs available to block out these sites.

Renay Thompson: Also, once the government steps in, who decides what is objectionable and what is not? If we are going to take the step of censoring sexually explicit material, then why not censor other potentially offensive material, such as those sites by racist groups, or even antiabortionists. Obviously, this would be a violation of these groups' First Amendment rights. Therefore the government should not censor what appears on the Internet, any more than it should censor the private, yet still potentially offensive publications of these groups, or pornographic magazines.

Angela Bellizzi: Parents, librarians, teachers and others that provide Internet access to children need to take the responsibility of monitoring their access. Legitimate web sites should not be deprived of their First Amendment right. That is why, Congressman Sanders, that we conclude in asking you to vote against future legislation that restricts online freedom of speech.

## JUVENILE VIOLENCE

(On behalf of David Gilbert, Melissa Jarvis, Amber Atherton, Corey Lasell and Douglas Kunkle)

Douglas Kunkle: We originally planned to discuss our feelings on NATO's action in Kosovo, but with the tragedy in Littleton, we had to choose between two violent and incomprehensible acts. We, with the rest of the country, have been shocked and dismayed with the most recent shooting and bombing incident at Columbine High School, and with the rest of the country, we have discussed and debated the economic, cultural, and technical factors which may have contributed to the escalating trend of violent crimes committed by juveniles in this country.

We understand that there is no quick solution to this problem. We only know that action must be taken.

Corey Lasell: Murder rates are down; but not among adolescents. According to Attorney General Janet Reno, the problem with children killing is likely to worsen. On a typical day in this country, nine teenagers are murdered, and since 1965 there has been a 464 percent increase in the murder arrest rate for 18-year-olds.

Here in Vermont, we feel protected from those kinds of statistics. We are lulled into thinking: "That couldn't happen in Vermont." But according to the study conducted by the Vermont Center for Justice Research, there has been a dramatic increase in crimes committed by Vermont's youth, and increasingly more violent ones.

Bill Clints, Director for the Center for Justice Research, said that the result of this study "indicates the need for further examination of the state's troubled youth in the confidential system that protects and prosecutes them."

Amber Atherton: We suggest that juveniles who commit violent crimes should be tried as an adult. Juveniles must be taught to accept responsibility for their actions. Right now, every juvenile knows the law protects them, and just about anything they do will be handled with kid gloves and a slap on the wrist. Punishment is usually in the form of probation and/or community service. Most juvenile delinquents do not get punished at all for the misdemeanor crimes, so some start committing felonies. We think, because they were not punished for the misdemeanor crimes, they feel they will not be punished for the felonies.

Melissa Jarvis: People are afraid to punish juveniles because they want to give them a second chance. Increasingly, this second chance is used to commit another crime. We think it is about time that the adults in charge look at the juvenile crime situation without colored glasses. This isn't the '50s. Children are killing and getting killed. Those killed do not get a second chance.

We think the fear of harsher punishments would serve as a deterrent for those juveniles who would be successful in programs such as diversion, and curtail the activities of habitual criminals. This will at least protect the general population from them.

David Gilbert: We are afraid lawmakers are scrambling around to pass new laws. The killers in Littleton broke 18 gun laws and more. There are plenty of laws. What we need to do is enforce, prosecute, and punish those who break them.

## LOWERING THE DRINKING AGE TO 18

(On behalf of Nicholas Dandrow, Eric Williams, Beth Nadeau, Becca Bergeron and Michael French)

Becca Bergeron: I will be speaking on behalf of the group.